

**FEATURES OF SPOKEN ENGLISH GRAMMAR MOSTLY USED
IN CLASSROOM DISCUSSION
IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROGRAM**
(An Educational Issue in Teaching Grammar for EFL Students)

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ABSTRACT

Presently, it is widely known that grammar is not only as a set of rules that outlines correct usage and involves the examination of grammar as an object, but it is also as a tool. This is called as functional grammar. Functional grammar has wider implication and uses of language. It can be a best support and allow the speaker to be more clearly and accurately expressing their ideas in communication. Then, this also makes the grammar of spoken and written language differ. This study was conducted to analyze and find out the features of spoken English grammar that mostly occurred in the classroom discussion.

Key Words: *Features of Spoken English Grammar, Classroom Discussion.*

INTRODUCTION

Discussing about communication, there are at least two forms. They can be in the form of spoken and written one. Each of them has its own characteristics. Specifically, Doshi and Ray (2008) explain that spoken language is one of the most intuitive forms of interaction between humans and others. Moreover, spoken language as explained by White on Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (2004: 6) deserves attention in its own right because of the special and distinct characteristics. This enables speaker to communicate complex ideas and feelings in changing and fluid environments. It is supported by Biber et al. (2002: 427) explains some characteristics of spoken language, such as: spoken language appears to be untidy, omits words or phrases and tends to be additive, repetitive, interactive and vague. Consequently, these characteristics of spoken language create some distinctions to written. One of the distinction is about grammar.

Meanwhile, spoken grammar can be viewed from three different perspectives. The first view rejects the existence of any grammar except written grammar (Leech, 2000), although nowadays, with advances in corpus linguistics and analysis of spoken corpora, this view is not taken seriously. The second view holds that there is no special grammar of spoken language, and its proponents. Experts believe that both spoken and written language have same grammar performing. They argue that speech and writing draw on the same underlying grammatical system rather than on two separate systems. The last view, however, maintains that there is a special grammar of spoken language. Carter and McCarthy (1995) highlight the grammatical features of spoken language largely neglected by standard grammars and somehow take the view of a new grammar of speech. Nevertheless, they state that “spoken language and written language are not sharply divided but exist on a continuum”. As Wendy and Lam (2002: 250) point out, “spoken language is not written language spoken aloud,” but it has its own

features and structures that differ from written language.

Then, since the grammar of spoken language is different from written, consequently the grammatical features of spoken discourse is also different. White(2004:15) claims that there are at least six features of spoken English grammar. They are ellipsis (omission of subject and verb), heads (the occurrence of noun/noun phrase at beginning) and tails (the occurrence of clause at the end), deixis (spatial and temporal deixis), spoken clause structure (the occurrence of coordinating and subordinating conjunction), vague language and modal expression. These six features are summarized and gotten from the result of CANCODE spoken corpus. CANCODE stands for "Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English". The corpus was established at the Department of English Studies, University of Nottingham, UK. It consists of five million words of transcribed conversations. These features of spoken English grammar were the core point in this research.

Therefore, people need to think and consider about the spoken English grammar in their communication, especially for teaching and learning English as a foreign language activity. This is because the current trends of teaching English which has shifted from a general notion of proficiency or competence towards skills-based approaches or called by Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Moreover, talking about CLT is fundamentally concerned with making meaning in the language, whether by interpreting someone else's message, expressing one's own, or negotiating when meaning is unclear.

English graduate program at the State University of Padang (UNP) is one of institution which offers a course of teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL). It provides the students to have good quality in English both orally and written, because sooner or later the students are expected to be professional English teachers or lecturers who have good skills especially in speaking. Dealing with EFL learning syllabus at English graduate program of UNP, most of the teaching and learning processes apply

presentation and discussion. Each meeting, one of group presents certain topic and then followed by discussion section. These discussion and presentation can be the best way to see the classroom interaction between lecturer and student, student and student, and lecturer and a group of students.

Dealing with classroom discussion, McGonial (2005:1), points out some advantages of classroom discussion. They are: 1) Increasing students' comfort with the specialized language and methods of a field. 2) Developing critical thinking. 3) Developing problem solving. Shortly, it can be concluded that discussion is a medium for learners and teacher, learners and learners to interact each other which deals with some particular topics

As stated previously, the major goal of the CLT is to develop students' abilities to communicate in meaningful context. Unfortunately, the goal of CLT has not fully reached yet at UNP. Based on the experience during studying at UNP, the students seemed to speak not effectively, interactively and communicatively. They were like bookish and tended to use complete sentence during the classroom interaction.

Furthermore, the classroom observation was done also in order to support the phenomena that related to the spoken grammar that used by the students' in their utterances in the classroom discussion. It was done on March 4th 2015. The result of the classroom observation showed that only several features of spoken English grammar tend to be used, such as discourse marker (the students used words/phrases like *I think, because, I mean*) and modal expressions (the students used words/phrases like *maybe* and *I don't know*) in the students' utterances in the classroom discussion.

Staying on the phenomena above which related to the students' spoken language that was not interactive, effective and communicative one and because of the importance of spoken English grammar, so that this article presents the features of spoken English grammar mostly used by students of UNP in the classroom discussion.

RESEARCH METHOD

The type of this research is descriptive qualitative research. This type of research determines and reports the way things are. Hence, this research explained the features of spoken English grammar mostly used in the classroom discussion at graduate English Education Program at the State University of Padang.

The data of this research were the transcription of utterances of the features of spoken English grammar in the classroom discussion used by the students of English Graduate program at the State University of Padang. The source of data was the students of English Graduate program in the first semester at UNP who took a subject by applying discussion in the learning process. There were about 72 students from three different classes namely A, B and C. Moreover, at the first semester there were six subjects, namely Trends in TEFL, Academic Writing, Applied Linguistic, Advance Sociolinguistic, Research Method and Statistic. All of those subjects mostly applied discussion in the learning process, but the data were taken in Applied Linguistic subject. This was due to Applied linguistic subject was a subject that applied discussion in the teaching and learning process, and the students were forced to use or speak English during the classroom discussion. In short, this was one of the consideration to take the data in the Applied Linguistic subject.

There were two instruments used to gather the data, namely observation sheet and video recorder. Observation sheet was used to observe how the features of spoken English grammar occurred during classroom discussion. Then, video recorder was used to record the students' utterances in the classroom discussion. The recording provided naturalistic material and it was a kind of authentic instrument. The data were recorded for five sections or times from three different classes which applied discussion in the teaching and learning process.

The data were gathered by doing observation in the classroom discussion for several times and the observation guidelines were used. Then, coming to the class and

observing the discussion based on the observation guidelines and then writing some notes based on what were found during the discussion were done. The aim of observation was to get real detail practice of features of spoken grammar during classroom discussion. Then, video recorder was used to record the classroom discussion in order to get what really happens in classroom and how the grammar of spoken language occurred. The researcher got involved in the classroom discussion as an observer while doing recording. It was done for some periods to collect data.

Moreover, in order to check the truth worthiness of the data, the triangulation technique was used. The triangulation is a technique of checking validity of the data that utilize something outside the data as checking or comparing toward the data. In this research, the data were collected by using various instruments such as video recorder and observation sheet. The data were gathered from three different classroom discussions. The researcher also did analysis based on various theories from the first and second sources. Regarding to this research, the data were derived from five recordings of classroom discussion from different classes. Hence, it can be stated that the truth-worthiness of this data and instruments have been reached.

After collecting the data that were sufficient needed from the video recording of discussion and observation sheet, the data were analyzed. There were several steps in analyzing the data collected. The first is recording the data by using video recorder and observing by using observation sheet. After that, the video recordings were transcribed. In transcribing the video recording, the code was given to classify the utterances of features of spoken English grammar from each recording. Then, the features of spoken English grammar of each transcription were put and identified into table and explained them into analysis. The features were classified based on the theories from some experts.

Furthermore, the researcher observed and classified how the features of spoken

English grammar occurred during the classroom discussion by observing the video recording and classifying them based on related theories. Then, to see the percentage of the grammatical features of spoken English that mostly occurred in classroom discussion, the formula suggested by Sugiono (2010) was used. The formula is as follows:

$$P = F/N \times 100\%$$

P: Percentage of grammatical features

F: Frequencies of grammatical features

N: Number of grammatical features

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research finding is explained in this part deals with the features of spoken English grammar mostly used in classroom discussion. It can be seen in the following explanation.

The data of this research were collected in the forms of words, phrases and sentences used by the students in their utterances in classroom discussion. In this research, there were five recordings of classroom discussion. Then, the data were obtained from the transcription of the classroom discussion.

After analyzing the transcription of five recordings of classroom discussion, the research finding about the features of spoken English grammar used by the students in the classroom discussion has been drawn. Words, phrases and sentences included in each features of spoken English grammar were categorized into a table. As a result, each features of spoken English grammar used by the students in the classroom discussion can be seen completely in the following table:

Table 1: The Features of Spoken English Grammar that were Found in the Five Data Recordings

No.	Recording I	Indicators
1	Tail	Reinforcement (<i>voice, right, eee... 18 months later</i>), Interrogatives (<i>is it right?</i>)
2	Deixis	Now, then, here
3	Ellipsis	Omission of <i>subject</i>
4	Spoken clause structure	And, so
5	Vague language	About, like
6	Modal Expression	Maybe, can, I think, should, have to, could, may
No.	Recording II	Indicators
1	Tail	Reinforcement (<i>Can affect the target language</i>) Interrogative (<i>right?</i>)
2	Deixis	Here, then, now
3	Ellipsis	subject and the verb (<i>any contribution or first language right?</i>)
4	Spoken clause structure	And
5	Vague language	About, like, how do we call this?, what we call this?
6	Modal Expression	Can, I think, have to, possible, maybe, could, need to, should, must
No.	Recording III	Indicators
1	Tail	(<i>we can say that such as American people</i>)

2	Deixis	Reinforcement (... <i>What factor</i>) interrogative (<i>right?</i>)
3	Ellipsis	Then, here, now
4	Spoken clause structure	Omission of subject and verb (<i>Maybe want to give additional information?</i>)
5	Vague language	And, so
6	Modal Expression	About, like, what we call
		Maybe, can/could, need to, I don't know, I think

No.	Recording IV	Indicators
1	Tail	Interrogative (... <i>right</i>), Reinforcement (... <i>you get it my point</i> , and ... <i>in general</i>)
2	Deixis	Then, here, now
3	Ellipsis	The omission of subject and verb (<i>how the teacher apply the turn taking aaa... in the classroom?</i> and <i>any addition?</i>)
4	Spoken clause structure	And
5	Vague language	About, like, something like that
6	Modal Expression	I think, can/could, maybe, have to, should, need to

No.	Recording V	Indicators
1	Tail	Interrogative (<i>right?</i>) and reinforcement (<i>That's it</i>)
2	Deixis	Then, here
3	Ellipsis	Omission of subject and the verb (<i>tense less?</i>)
4	Spoken clause structure	And, so
5	Vague language	About, like, can be called, they called, what we called
6	Modal Expression	Maybe, can, could, should, I think, have to, may

a) Deixis

Dealing with deixis, it occurred in all of the data recording. Deixis was one of the features of spoken English grammar that often used by the students in the classroom discussion. The occurrence of deixis in someone's utterances was to describe the orientational features of language, including words and phrases which point directly to particular features of the immediate situation. In the first data recording (20 times of occurrence), it was found the words *now*, *then* and *here* in the students' utterances as the indication of the occurrence of deixis, and it is as well as in the second (14 times of occurrence), the third (14 times of

occurrences) and the fourth data recording (25 times of occurrence). Meanwhile, in the fifth data recording only *then* and *here* which were found in the students' utterances (12 times of occurrence). The occurrences of deixis in the students' utterances can be seen in the examples below:

Student: *Thank you for the last speaker, **now** we come to the next session aaa... it is discussion session if you have something to be discussed please raise your hand!*

Student: *... ok cohesion focus on lexical and phrasal hesitation and **then** anaphora, third syntactic conjunction ...*

Student: ... *aaa... narration **here** that means that *aaa... everybody has ability to tell the story ...**

Dealing with the example above, the students used *now, then* and *here* in their utterances to indicate that they were talking about point or period in time matches the time of their utterance. They used *now, then* and *here* to indicate the time and place when they were in the classroom discussion. As a result, the listeners or the audience understood that the word *now, then* and *here* mean the time and place which indicate the period in the classroom discussion.

In short, it can be concluded that only *now, then* and *here* were found in the students' utterances as the indication of deixis in the classroom discussion.

b) Ellipsis

The next features of spoken English grammar which occurred in the data recording is ellipsis. Ellipsis means that when the subject and verbs are omitted by the speaker. The occurrence of ellipsis in students' utterances was not as many as deixis. The ellipsis occurred when the speakers can assume that the listeners know enough about people and things in the immediate situation. It can be seen in the examples of utterance below:

Student: *Aaa... any other additional information about the example Lesvi ask?*

In that utterance, actually it was not complete yet, there was no subject. But, the listener knew what the speaker said. The speaker said it to ask to the listeners about their point of view on the previous topic, rather they had additional information or not. By using ellipsis or omitting some words in the utterances, the speaker can create efficient and clear communication.

Relating to the data finding, it was found both omission of subject and verb appeared in the data recording, except in the first recording (only omission of subject). In short, it can be concluded that the students

used ellipsis in their utterances in the classroom discussion.

c) Head and Tail

Furthermore, based on the data recording and transcript, it was also found some students' utterances used head and tail in the classroom discussion. Head allows the speakers to highlight the topic they want to talk about before commenting on it, giving both the speaker and the listener more processing time in real time communication. Meanwhile tail deal with the real time processing and interactiveness of speech by allowing the speakers to both edit their comments and give evaluative statements of topics. The function of tail including clarifying a comment, expressing a personal attitude and serving an interpersonal function. The examples of head and tail can be understood in the following examples:

Student: *And the most important thing that like the presenter said that it is about the movie **aaa... aaa... horror story, and... this is also give social aaa... voice, social voice about American, right, like presenter said before.***

Student: ***we can say that such as American people,** they tend to be individual so they (inaudible), but in Asia **aaa... most of the society aaa... have the social construction, so they... so they have high social construction.***

Based on the examples above, the first is the example of tail. The speaker used "*right, like presenter said before*" to help to reinforce what was said, or it can also to add emphasis and ensure that the listener did not lose reference to the original topic. Then, in the second example it belongs to the head. The speaker said "*we can say that such as American people*", it is a kind of noun phrase which was placed at the beginning of a clause that was then followed by a subsequent pronoun (*they tend to be individual so they, but in Asia aaa... most of the society aaa...*) to ensure that the listener follow the reference.

Dealing with the five data recordings, it was found that 5 times of the occurrence of tail in the first recording. Then, in second, the third and the forth recording, tail occurred 3 time in the students' utterances. For the last recording, tail occurred 6 times. It can be concluded that the students mostly used tails in the form of interrogative and reinforcement.

d) Modal Expression

The next features of spoken English grammar that occurred in each data recording is modal expression. Modal expression is one of the most frequent that occurred in the students' utterances in the classroom discussion. The occurrence of modal expression was signed by the use of modal verbs, marginal modal, and semi modals.

Regarding to the data description, it was discovered some indicators in the five data recordings which indicated the modal expression. The indicators that were found in the form of words, phrases and sentence. They were like: *Maybe, can, I think, should, have to, could, may, possible, maybe, need to, must, and I don't know.*

Then, dealing with modal expression, it was found 23 times of occurrence in the first recording. Then, 28 times were found in the second recording. In the third recording, it was found 31 times of the occurrence of modal expression. For the forth and the fifth recording, modal expressions were found 20 and 28 times. The occurrences of modal expression in students' utterances can be seen in the examples below:

Student: *Before we... before we do narration eee... before we get narration we do narrating, **maybe** narrating is just like classes.*

Student: *we **can** tell the... story even the story not happen to us, we **can** create the story, so aaa... narration is the skill that everyone brings to school here means that aaa...*

Student: *Ooo... **I think** if we talk about aaa... the narration in your statement, but you don't give example why narrating, aaa... my question based on your statement and give the example...*

Student: *How they do twice in.... research and why **should** wait aaa... until 8 months later? Eee... 18 months later?*

Student: *you **have to** find that cost, cost is like lack.*

Student: *how are they related or how **could** you say that these two articles related to applied linguistic?*

Student: ***May** I try mam?*

e) Vague Language

Moreover, the less features of spoken English grammar which found in the students' utterances in the classroom discussion were vague language. Vague language is signed by the individual general lexical terms (e.g. *thing, stuff* and *whatever*) as well as high frequency verbs. The function of vague language can be used when someone does not the name of something (*do you call it?, what's it called it? etc.*). Then, when someone wants to make things sound less factual (*about, kind of, sort of*) and when someone wants to talk about groups and categories (*necklaces, bracelets and things like that*). Relating to the data description and analysis, it was found some vague languages from the five data recordings.

In the first data recording, the words like *about* and *like* became as the indications of the occurrence of vague language in the students' utterances (20 times of occurrence). Then for second data recording (24 times of occurrence), the words or phrases like *about, like, how do we call this* and *what we call this* signed the occurrence of vague language. Furthermore, for the third (26 times of occurrence), the fourth (16 times of occurrence) and the fifth (34 times of

occurrence) data recordings there were some words or phrases that can be as indication of the occurrence of vague language. They were *about, like, what we call, something like that, can be called and they called*. Relating to the five data recordings, it can be said that the occurrence of vague language in students' utterances in the classroom discussion was proved by some words or phrases like *about, like, can be called, they called, how do we call this? what we called, and something like that*.

f) Spoken Clause Structure

Spoken clause structure related to the characteristic of spoken language that spontaneous, with only limited planning and thinking time. It is particularly marked in clause structure, where one clause is added to another in linear way. The sign of the spoken clause structure is usually indicated by coordinating conjunction (*and*) or by simple subordinating conjunction (*cos* or *so*). Dealing with data recording, almost in each data recording was found the word *andandso*. *Andandso* were the indication of the occurrence of spoken clause structure on students' utterances in the classroom discussion. For example:

Student: *Aaa... like I explained before, turn taking is the... aaa... the... the teachers **and**aaa... the teachers and the students aaa... take the... the.. the... the.. turn, take the turn, it's mean that when the teacher aaa... get instruction to the teacher... when the teacher give instruction to*

*the students **and** when the students aaa... aaaa... respond the teacher's instruction.* (see appendix)

Based on the example above, the speaker had several clauses in her/his utterances, it is indicated with the occurrence of "and" in the utterances. First, the speaker said "Aaa... like I explained before, turn taking is the... aaa... the... the teachers" and after that the speaker directly added his/her utterances by "**and**aaa... the teachers and the students aaa... take the... the.. the... the.. turn, take the turn, it's mean that when the teacher aaa... get instruction to the teacher... when the teacher give instruction to the students...." Based on this example, the speaker spontaneously added a new clause in her/his utterance, because she/ he did not have time to construct any main and subordinate clause, so that she/he linked his/her clauses by coordinating conjunction.

Dealing with data recording, it was found 13 times of the occurrence of spoken clause structure, then 14 times in the second data recording. In the third data recording, spoken clause structure was used 25 times. Then, for the fourth and the fifth data recording, spoken clause structure was found 9 and 13 times.

In short, all of the explanation about the features of spoken English grammar mostly used in the classroom discussion above can be seen in the following table:

The Frequency of Features of Spoken English Grammar Used by the Students in the Classroom Discussion

Features of spoken English Grammar	The Frequency of the Occurrence						
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	Total	Perc.
Head and Tail	5	3	3	3	6	23	5.06%
Deixis	20	14	14	25	12	85	18.68%
Ellipsis	4	9	3	5	2	23	5.06%
Spoken Clause Structure	13	14	25	9	13	74	16.26%

Vague Language	20	24	26	16	34	120	26.37%
Modal expression	23	28	31	20	28	130	28.57%
						455	100%

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

1. Conclusion

Based on the result of the research, it can be concluded that the students used all of the features of spoken English grammar in their utterances in the classroom discussion. They used tail (*reinforcement* and *interrogative*), deixis (*now*, *then* and *here*), ellipsis (omission of subject and verb), spoken clause structure (*andandso*), vague language (*about*, *like*, *can be called*, *they called*, *how do we call this?* *what we called*, and *something like that*) and modal expression (*Maybe*, *can*, *I think*, *should*, *have to*, *could*, *may*, *possible*, *maybe*, *need to*, *must*, and *I don't know*).

Then, dealing with the features of spoken English grammar that mostly occurred in the classroom discussion, it can be concluded that the most frequent was modal expression which occurred 130 times (28.57%). Meanwhile the less frequent and the least frequent features were vague language 120 times (26.37%), deixis 85 times (18.68%), spoken clause structure 74 times (16.26%), ellipsis 23 times (5.06%) and head and tails 23 times (5.06%).

2. Suggestion

Based on the result of the research, there are several suggestions can be given. First, for English graduate students, as presenters, they should consider more features of spoken English grammar. They should improve their willingness to know more about words, phrases, or sentences included in each

features of spoken English grammar and use them appropriately in their utterances. It is because they influence an effective communication in which the presenters as the speakers can organize their speech and lead the listeners to the topic being discussed. In other words, it influences interactions occur between them.

Furthermore, despite spoken English grammar has an important role in communication, but it is rarely or never taught to the students. Therefore, it is suggested for the teacher or lecturer to teach the features of spoken English grammar more frequently in teaching. Moreover, they are also suggested to provide more learning activities for students to employ the features of spoken English grammar to encourage their students to use more variations of features of spoken English grammar in their communication.

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